

Elsie Sperry was born on 21 November 1881 in Stockton, California, the daughter of George Barker Sperry and Georgea Staples Sperry. She was the grand-child of Simon Willard Sperry, a miller in Columbia, N.H., and Caroline Barker Sperry from Auburn, N.Y. Simon Willard Sperry moved his family and his mill to Stockton sometime in the mid-1800s when for several years New England farmers fared so poorly from the weather that they moved westward, and so did their miller.... The family fared very well in California which gave Mother the advantages of good education and refined living. She graduated from Miss Spence's School in New York in 1900.

Before the 1906 earthquake and fire she took several trips to Europe and seems to have visited many countries. Languages came easily to her and I remember her reading Latin without effort. This[^] probably when she started to collect books, maps and objects d'art.

Father, born Arno Dosch, in Portland, Oregon in 1879, was the son of Henry Dosch and Marie Fleurot. Grand-Father Dosch in his youth rode the pony express from St. Louis to Oregon. Marie Fleurot's family ran an inn on the eastern edge of Oregon. Father graduated from Harvard's law school in 1904, but decided instead to become a journalist. Law he always said was invaluable to him in his career as a political reporter. I have the manuscript of his *mémoires*. It makes excellent reading.

Father and Mother met in the aftermath of the earthquake where Mother was helping with the soup kitchens. By then I believe that my Sperry grand-parents had moved to Redwood City. Mother had been spending the night at the home of an aunt the night of the earthquake on ^{the} site of what is now Grace Cathedral.

Mother and Father were married in January, 1908. At the time Father was working for the Oregonian, in Portland, and also for The Call Bulletin, in San Francisco. My sister, my only sibling, Betsey, was born in San Francisco in 1909. Father and Mother moved to New York City some time after that where Father wrote for The World's Works. It was they who sent him to France to report the 1914-1918 World War. Betsey was left in the care of my Sperry grand-parents. Mother went with Father to France, where they covered the front on bicycles! I have a few pages of typewritten material, two or three at the most, which Mother wrote almost under duress when we begged her to write about her own experiences. I'm afraid that she preferred reading.... Their great problem was the German name Dosch. It was on their return to this country in June 1915 that it was suggested to Father that he use his mother's name as the Spaniards do, and that is now it happened that he became Arno Dosch-Fleurot and I was born Daphné Limé Dosch-Fleurot. Limé being the name of a little village in the war zone !

Father went back to France leaving Mother to fetch Betsey and return with both of us to France in the summer of 1916. By then Father was constantly off on assignments, already working for the New York World, and eventually covering the Russian revolution.

Mother, never unoccupied ~~was~~ to work with the Red Cross for the duration of the war, Incidentally, the same building where for some years Middlebury College Headquarters have been located on the rue de la Grande Chaumière, which makes for a nice coincidence ! We saw very little of Father. All I remember is that suddenly Mother was called Mrs. Sperry and that it became very confusing that we little girls were Dosch-Fleurot.....

Betsey went to school like all good children. I, unfortunately, picked up all known childhood diseases at each effort to educate me, and even more so when we moved down to the Charente, where Mother, for \$2,000. bought a 14th Century chateau in the little village of Montmoreau into which we moved eventually with what had become a rather large collection of "things". I think it is necessary to visualize Mother in these surroundings to understand her collection. She was on the mailing list of ALL the parisian booksellers and probably elsewhere and we went to ALL auctions. This helped to furnished the house in the period that it was built. The original ~~ext~~ 12th century chateau had been destroyed by fire, but the chapel remained. It took years for Mother to get the Beaux Arts to come, and finally classify the chapel as a "monument historique." Mother belonged to the Archaeological society of the Charente which made for very interesting trips. I was always taken along. A better form of education than catching local children's diseases! Mother's collection of books and maps became quite respectable. Betsey was shipped off to California when she was 21. She had attend^{ed}~~ing~~ the Lycée in Tours, then the Civilization Française courses at the Sorbonne. At 14 I was sent to boarding school in Angers. Mother's French was so good that few French people detected her accent. She spent all her time studying it seemed to me. Certainly she was an expert in historical events as they interconnected. She was fascinated especially by French history, architecture, art, but their literature eluded her. She was devoted to American and English poets, always quoting them. She took a course at the Ecole du Louvre while I was in ²boarding school. Then at 21 I, too, was shipped out.

By 1942, in the middle of the Nazi Occupation, our consul in Bordeaux informed her that it would be wise for her to leave by the last Red Cross contingent leaving from Portugal, that she could *take* everything she wanted except her books. So, heart broken I am sure, she left her house and books and most everything else, in the care of a Turkish friend. But the Nazis occupied the house almost immediately - and practically ruined it - forcing this poor turkish woman to seek refuge elsewhere. Betsey located her in 1948 in Poitiers. She had survived by selling a good part of Mother's books. Mother understood this, but what was unpardonable is that in doing so the woman had broken up complete sets. As you have probably noticed. Mother never forgave that. I imagine that most of those missing books are now back in the hands of the parisian booksellers... I think Mother must have started this collecting early, bcause quite a few books are marked "Arno Dosch." That was done in Portland after Mother and Father closed their apartment in New York and sent their belongings to the family for safe keeping, and marking their things was a sort of protection, perhaps. Mother didn't appreciate it, I remember, not that "Arno Dosch" !!

When Mother returned, to San Francisco, she soon became involved in learning ^{bookbinding} ~~bookbinding~~, jewelry making, involving herself in saving the cable cars, etc. She went back to France in the 50's but France had changed, she had lost her zest. She sold the house for exactly what she paid for it to a Monsieur Tête who has restored ^{it} beautifully I am told.

Mother moved to San Anselmo, north of San Francisco. She was not taking care of her health, she fell, broke an arm, became senile, and died in a convalescent home in 1970. She is buried in the

family plot in Stockton.

Mother and Father's only descendants alive now are myself, Anne Danila Raku, née Berenbach, Middlebury Class of 1975, and her little daughter Kaela Raku who we hope will be knocking at Middlebury's door for admission in another fourteen years or so. Danila, her husband Kanzan and Kaela ~~live~~ in Boulder, Colorado, until their plan to ^{move to} Orcas Island in Washington, materializes.

I should like to add that Mother was a very warm, understanding person, and generous to boot. She was a very loving parent, demanding and severe at times. She had a great sense of humour, seeing the funny side of the worse situations. She had great stature though she was not tall. The prototype of the "grande dame", which rather awed some of the Montmoreau inhabitants (the Montmorelliens). But monsieur le curé and our doctor were very devoted to her. Monsieur le Curé never tried to convert her to Catholicism. He was far too interested in what SHE had to say about things! Her resources, by the way, came from dividends received from the Sperry Mills which became part of General Mills, and these dividends were very fluctuating indeed. And whatever alimony Father could afford for the upkeep of us two girls. I learned to sew my clothes when I was about nine, and also to cook though Mother was an outstanding ~~onek~~ herself when she thought about it. Most of her income, of course, went to the purchase of all those irresistible books and such....

Et Voilà, c'est tout.

